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ABSTRACT

This document examines the orientations or "frames" that leaders use to guide their understanding of their work. Four distinct frames that characterize ways leaders think about and respond to everyday issues and problems are examined: (1) the structural frame; (2) the human resource frame; (3) the political frame; and (4) the symbolic frame. Leaders provided narratives about their experience and, using survey instruments, rated themselves and their colleagues on two dimensions of leadership for each of the four frames. Their responses suggest which frames leaders use; how well frames capture the administrators' thinking; how well the frames predict administrator effectiveness; and how gender relates to leadership orientation. Results show that the variables which predict effectiveness as a manager are different from those that predict effectiveness as a leader, and that leadership effectiveness is particularly associated with high scores on the symbolic dimensions, but is largely unrelated to the structural frame. Seven tables are included. (5 references) (CLA)

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NCEL

The National Center for Educational Leadership

Images of Leadership

by

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Occasional Paper No. 7

January 1991

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NCEL OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

1. *Re-Thinking School Leadership: An Agenda for Research and Reform* by Lee G. Bolman, Susan Moore Johnson, Jerome T. Murphy, and Carol H. Weiss; Harvard University (February 1990)

   This paper presents a basic model of the relationship between leadership, situation, and outcomes. Personal characteristics of leaders and the situation in which leaders find themselves both influence what leaders do, which in turn influences the kinds of outcomes that they produce. Embedded in the model are three questions: "What is good school leadership?" "How does good school leadership come about?" and "What will good school leadership mean in the future?" Systematic ways of approaching these questions are also presented.

2. *Preparing School Administrators for the Twenty-First Century: The Reform Agenda* by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (May 1990)

   In the second wave of school reform reports and studies of the 1980s, much attention has been directed to issues of school administration and leadership. Yet, to date, no comprehensive analysis of these calls for changes in school administration has been undertaken. The purpose of this paper is to provide such a review. The goals of the paper are threefold: (1) to explain the reasons for the calls for reform of school administration, (2) to review the major studies and reports on education reform from 1982 to 1988 and (3) to discuss educational administration reform issues that need further attention.

3. *What Makes a Difference? School Context, Principal Leadership, and Student Achievement* by Philip Hallinger, Leonard Bickman, and Ken Davis; Vanderbilt University (June 1990)

   This paper addresses the general question, what makes a difference in school learning? We report the results of a secondary analysis of data collected as part of the Tennessee School Improvement Incentives Project. We utilized the instructional leadership model developed by researchers at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development to guide our analyses. This conceptual model makes provision for analysis of principal leadership in relation to features of the school environment, school-level organization, and student outcomes. The paper focuses on the following research questions: (1) What antecedents appear to influence principal leadership behavior? (2) What impact does principal leadership have on the organization and its outcomes? (3) To what extent is the Far West Lab instructional leadership framework supported empirically by the data collected in this study?

4. *The Teaching Project at the Edward Devotion School: A Case Study of a Teacher-Initiated Restructuring Project* by Katherine C. Boles; Harvard University (September 1990)

   School districts around the country are in the process of initiating projects to restructure their schools. A small but growing number of these restructuring projects have been initiated by teachers, but as yet little has been written documenting the experience of classroom practitioners involved in such efforts. The purpose of this study is to add teachers' voices to the literature on restructuring. This project restructured a portion of a school and altered the work of a group of third and fourth grade teachers.

5. *Educational Reform in the 1980s: Explaining Some Surprising Success* by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (September 1990)

In this paper issues of success and failure of reform initiatives are discussed from both sides of the aisle. The paper begins with a review of the financial, political, and organizational factors which normally support the position that reform measures are likely to result in few substantive improvements. Next the argument is made that educational reform recommendations have been surprisingly successful, and some speculations as to the reasons for this unexpected outcome are presented.

6. *New Settings and Changing Norms for Principal Development* by Philip Hallinger; Vanderbilt University and Robert Wimpelberg; University of New Orleans (January 1991)

Recently analysts have identified a variety of features that distinguish emerging administrative training programs from traditional ones. The rapid, but non-systematic growth in organizations providing administrative development services during the 1980's led to considerable natural variation in programmatic content as well as in organizational processes. In particular, significant variations emerged in the operation of state sponsored leadership academies and local principals' centers. The purpose of this paper is to analyze variations in current approaches to educational leadership development. The paper addresses three questions: (1) What is the range of variation among emerging staff development programs for school leaders on dimensions of program content and organizational process? (2) What can we learn from the naturally occurring variations in administrative development? (3) What are the most likely and promising directions for administrative development programs in the next decade?

7. *Images of Leadership* by Lee G. Bolman; Harvard University and Terrence E. Deal; Vanderbilt University (January 1991)

This project has undertaken a major study of the "frames", or orientations that leaders use to guide their understanding of their work. The investigators have developed a set of survey instruments to measure four leadership orientations (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic), and collected data from leaders approach their task constituents in both education and the private sector. Their research results show that the four leadership orientations do capture significant elements of how leaders approach their task, and that those leadership variables are significantly associated with effectiveness. The results further show that the variables which predict effectiveness as a *manager* are different from those that predict effectiveness as a *leader*. In particular, structural and rational orientations are primarily predictive of leader effectiveness. This research was reported at the AERA meeting in April, 1990.

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Thank you.

IMAGES OF LEADERSHIP[1]

by

Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal

> "What people understand to be the organization of their experience, they buttress, and perforce, self-fulfillingly. They develop a corpus of cautionary tales, games, riddles, experiments, newsy stories, and other scenarios which elegantly confirm a frame relevant view of the workings of the world... in countless ways and unceasingly social life takes up and freezes itself into the understandings we have of it." (Goffman, p. 563)

Like everyone else, leaders view their experience through a set of preconditioned lenses and filters. They often resist questioning their view of how an organization works--or might work better. When their frame of reference fits the circumstances they face, they can understand and shape human experience. When it does not, their frames freeze into a distorted picture that traps leaders in their misconceptions. They explain failure by blaming circumstances rather than their own inability to read and respond to the situation at hand.

Over the years, scholars have spent considerable time and energy trying to identify the characteristics or traits of effective leaders. Policymakers and others have spent even more on programs designed to improve leadership skills. Yet research and training have often produced disappointing results. Perhaps, we have been looking in the wrong place and have given too little attention to how leaders perceive and define situations. A faulty diagnosis rarely leads to effective action, and misreading the situation can undermine even a leader of exceptional stature and skill.

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[1]This paper was presented at the American Educational Research Association Meeting in April 1990. We are grateful to our colleagues in the National Center for Educational Leadership, and particularly to Todd DeMitchell, Alma Hall, Mari Parker, and Joe Tham.

In this paper, we report an effort to identify how leaders see their worlds. Are there common patterns in the images or lenses they employ? Do leaders adjust their lenses to fit the circumstances or do they shape the situation to fit their preferred conception? Are leaders with multiple frames more effective than those with a singular focus? Under what conditions can leaders learn to be more flexible in defining situations accurately?

Leadership Images or Frames

The concept of frames has many synonyms in the social science literature--maps, images, schemata, frames of reference, perspectives, orientations, lenses and mindscapes. The different labels share an assumption that individuals see the world in different ways because they are embedded in different world views. Because the world of human experience is ambiguous, frames of reference shape how situations are defined and determine what actions are taken.

The world views of leaders are formed through their heritage, early experiences, formal training, and experience on the job. The mix of these influences varies from person to person and sector to sector, but learning from experience often plays a more powerful role than formal education. School principals, for example, report their most helpful learning came from their administrative experience. Next most helpful was their training as a teacher. Finishing a distant third was their formal training in administration (Deal, Dornbusch and Crawford, 1977).

In our work with experienced leaders in both education and other sectors, we see many examples of Goffman's suggestion that frames of reference are self-

fulfilling. Leaders develop accounts, explanations, and fictions to justify their point of view--even when their perspective is not working. During the 1980s, Roger Smith, the chief executive of General Motors, presided over a dismal decade in GM's history, yet had great difficulty shifting his approach to the company's problems (Bolman and Deal, 1991). The same is true of many school leaders--they continue to employ their existing frameworks, even when there was abundant evidence that something new was needed. When they use the wrong lens, leaders cannot figure out "what's really going on", and it is very hard to lead well when you misunderstand who and what you are trying to lead. When they do not understand why things are not working, leaders experience confusion. They feel off-balance and out of control. But the same mindset that caused them to misread the situation also prevents a recognition of the error.

Four Perspectives on Organization and Leadership

Several years ago, we distilled theories of organizations into four traditions, which we labeled "frames" (Bolman and Deal, 1984). We believed that these four distinct images existed not only in textbooks, but in the ways that leaders think and act in response to everyday issues and problems.

The first of those perspectives, the *structural* frame, derives its outlook particularly from the discipline of sociology. The frame emphasizes goals and efficiency. It posits that effective organizations define clear goals, differentiate people into specific roles, and coordinate diverse activities through policies, rules, and chain of command. Structural leaders value analysis and data, keep their eye on the

bottom line, set clear directions, hold people accountable for results, and try to solve organizational problems with either new policies and rules or through restructuring.

The *human resource* frame, borrows its assumptions from the fields of psychology and organizational behavior. It focuses attention on human needs and assumes that organizations that meet basic needs will work better than those that do not. Human resource leaders value relationships and feelings and seek to lead through facilitation and empowerment. They tend to define problems in individual or interpersonal terms and look for ways to adjust the organization to fit people--or to adjust the people to fit the organization (for example, through training and workshops).

The *political* frame emphasizes the individual and group interests that often displace organizational goals. Borrowing ideas from political science, the frame assumes a continuing competition among different interests for scarce resources. Conflict is seen as a normal by-product of collective action. Political leaders are advocates and negotiators who value realism and pragmatism. They spend much of their time networking, creating coalitions, building a power base, and negotiating compromises.

The *symbolic* frame synthesizes concepts and imagery from a number of disciplines--most notably the field of anthropology. It sees a chaotic world in which meaning and predictability are social creations and facts are interpretative rather than objective. Organizations develop symbols and culture that shape human behavior unobtrusively and provide a shared sense of mission and identity. Symbolic leaders instill a sense of enthusiasm and commitment through charisma and drama. They pay diligent attention to myth, ritual, ceremony, stories, and other symbolic forms.

Problems are seen originating in an organization's history, existing cultural patterns, or its visions of the future.

Our experience has convinced us that the frames form the foundations for human thought and action in both schools and other organizations. They are visible in leadership behavior, suggesting that leaders use the four lenses to interpret what is going on, to decide what to do and to interpret the results of their action. To provide empirical data to support those suppositions, we have begun a research program to investigate the role that frames play in the thinking and action of leaders and administrators.

Studying Leaders' Frames

We have begun a series of empirical investigations into how leaders use frames: how many they use and which ones. Our methods include a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, because each has different advantages in studying leaders' world views. Qualitative methods are particularly effective in getting at the subtleties of how leaders think and how they frame their experience. Quantitative methods are particularly useful in examining the relationship between the frames of leaders and their constituents.

Qualitative Investigations

Our qualitative work focuses on the frames embedded in narratives that leaders provide about their experience. We have used those narratives to answer two questions: (a) how many frames do leaders use? (b) which frames do they use?

Table 1 shows data from three different samples of educational administrators in terms of the number of frames that they use. The first is a sample of 32 college presidents reported by Bensimon (1989). Bensimon interviewed each president intensively and coded the interview transcripts for the use of each of Bolman and Deal's four frames. The second is a sample of 75 senior administrators in higher education who participated in the Institute for Educational Management. Members of that group were highly diverse with respect to geography and institutional type. Most held positions at the level of Dean, Vice-President, or President. The third is a sample of 15 central office administrators from school districts in a midwestern state.

The results in all three samples show that leaders rarely use more than two frames and almost no one uses four frames: in every sample the percentage of leaders who used more than two frames was less than 25%, and the number who used four frames was 1% or less.

Which Frames do Leaders Use?

Table 2 reports which frames were employed by the leaders in the same three samples. The results suggest that the sample of presidents was different from the other two samples. The presidents most frequently used the human resource frame,

and were least likely to use the structural frame. They were also much more likely to use the symbolic frame--almost half of the presidents, compared to 11% of the other sample of higher education administrators and only 5% of the school administrators.

Quantitative Investigations

Our quantitative investigations employ a survey instrument, "Leadership Orientations," derived from the four organization frames. It contains 32 items with five point response scales. The instrument is designed to measure eight separate dimensions of leadership--two for each frame. We list the eight dimensions below:

1. *Human Resource Dimensions*
    a. *Supportive*: concerned about the feelings of others; supportive and responsive
    b. Participative: fosters participation and involvement; listens and is open to new ideas
2. *Structural Dimensions*
    a. Analytic: thinks clearly and logically; approaches problems with facts and attends to detail
    b. Organized: develops clear goals and policies; hold people accountable for results
3. *Political Dimensions*
    a. Powerful: persuasive, high level of ability to mobilize people and resources; effective at building alliances and support
    b. Adroit: politically sensitive and skillful; a skillful negotiator in face of conflict and opposition

4. *Symbolic Dimensions*

   a. Inspirational: inspires others to loyalty and enthusiasm; communicates a strong sense of vision

   b. Charismatic: imaginative, emphasizes culture and values; is highly charismatic

The instrument has two parallel forms: one for individuals to rate themselves, and another in which their colleagues (superiors, peers, subordinates, etc.) can rate them.

We have collected data from respondents in schools, higher education, government, and the private sector. We have used the data to address a number of significant questions about leadership, and in this paper, we present evidence on three of those questions:

1. How well do the frames capture administrators' thinking?
2. How well do the frames predict administrators' effectiveness?
3. How does gender relate to leadership orientations?

Do the Frames Capture How Administrators Think?

We have conducted a number of factor analyses of responses to our leadership instruments, including analyses of both administrators' self-ratings, and of ratings by others. Factors associated with the four frames consistently emerge from the data. The factor structures are somewhat different for self and colleague-ratings, but in both cases all four frames emerge clearly. Table 3 shows an example of an analysis using data from about 680 senior administrators in higher education. Using a conventional procedure (principal components analysis, followed by varimax rotation of all factors with an eigenvalue > 1), the analysis produced four factors, each of

which represents one of the frames. We have found similar results in other populations. The factors are usually very clean. When items do bleed across frames, it arises from overlap of the symbolic frame with the human resource or political frames. However, the political and human resource frames show little overlaps with each other, and none of the frames overlaps with the structural frame.

Do the Frames Predict Effectiveness?

As a preliminary step in exploring the link between the frames and effectiveness, we did two separate regression analyses. We collected colleagues' ratings of effectiveness as both a manager and a leader. We did not define the meaning of the two terms because we wanted to learn about the implicit meanings that administrators give to the two concepts. We used the four leadership frames as predictor variables in regression analyses. The results are shown in tables 4, 5 and 6. The results are provocative. First, using the four frames we are able to predict a minimum of 66% of the variance in perceived managerial effectiveness, 74% in leadership effectiveness. Even more interesting, the array of independent variables that are associated with effectiveness as a manager is almost the reverse of those associated with effectiveness as a leader. For two of the three samples, the structural frame is the best predictor of managerial effectiveness, but for all three it is the *worst* predictor of effectiveness as a leader (non-significant for two, a significant negative predictor for the third). For the symbolic frame, the pattern is reversed: it is consistently the worst predictor of effectiveness as a manager but is the best predictor of effectiveness as a leader in two of the three samples and second best in the third.

These analyses also show that the human resource and the political frames are positively related to effectiveness as both manager and leader in every sample. What is more stunning is that, across sectors, the political frame is usually a better predictor of both managerial and leadership effectiveness than the human resource frame. This runs counter to the widespread feeling that politics in organizations is an unpleasant, if unavoidable evil. This negative view of politics is embodied in one widely-used management-style instrument that tells managers that an effective profile includes a *low* score on politics. Our data show the opposite--that people who are more adept in understanding and using the political frame are perceived by their colleagues, superiors, and subordinates as better managers *and* leaders. Our international corporate sample (Table 6) suggest that this is true across sectors and cultures.

Gender and the Frames

Because there are still too few women in administrative roles, only one of our samples--the higher education administrators--contains enough women to analyze gender as a variable. About 40% of this sample of about 190 senior and mid-level administrators were female; they came from public and private colleges and universities all over the United States. In this sample, gender shows remarkably little relationship to any of the variables (see Table 7). Stereotypically, we might expect that women would rate themselves higher on the human resource frame (warm, supportive, participative) and lower on the political frame (powerful, shrewd, aggressive). But the data give those stereotypes no support. Women do not consistently rate themselves higher or lower on the any of the frames. In this sample,

there is a slight tendency for colleagues to rate men slightly lower on every frame except structure, but the correlations are very small. Moreover, there were essentially no differences between men and women in how they were rated by colleagues on effectiveness as both manager and leader. (If anything, men were rated slightly *lower* on both effectiveness measures, but none of the relationships is statistically significant.)

This was a sample of *successful* men and women, who held positions ranging from department chair to college president. We do not know if the results would generalize to a less selective population, but they certainly raise questions about many conventional views of differences between men and women as administrators.

Where We Are: A Summary

We have shown that the frames can be measured using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative work suggests that most administrators in both schools and higher education use only one or two of the frames. Except for presidents, administrators use the symbolic frame much less than the other three. Both the qualitative and quantitative results suggest that the ability to use multiple frames is important to effectiveness in senior administrative positions.

Factor analysis of our survey instrument shows that responses cluster around our conceptual categories as anticipated. Results from three different populations show that, implicitly, managers distinguish between good managers and good leaders. The frame instrument is able to predict effectiveness as both manager and leader, but the pattern is different for the two variables. Leadership effectiveness is particularly

associated with high scores on the symbolic dimensions, but is largely unrelated to the structural frame. For managerial effectiveness, the results are almost reversed: the symbolic frame is never a significant predictor, but the structural frame always is. The other two frames--human resource and political--are both significant positive predictors of success as both leader and manager, but the political frame is consistently the more powerful of the two. Across sectors, professional programs for administrators rarely give much attention to symbolic and political skills, yet our results show they are crucial components for effective leadership.

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Table 1:

How Many Frames do Leaders Use?

How Many Frames?	**College Presidents** (Bensimon, 1989) (N=32)	**Higher Education Administrators** (N=75)	**School Administrators** (N=15)
One	41%	33%	40%
Two	34%	55%	55%
Three	22%	11%	5%
Four	1%	1%	--

Table 2:

Which Frames do Leaders Use?

Which Frames?	**College Presidents** (Bensimon, 1989) (N=32)	**Higher Education Administrators** (N=75)	**School Administrators** (N=15)
Structural	28%	53%	50%
Human Resource	63%	55%	40%
Political	47%	59%	70%
Symbolic	50%	11%	5%

Table 3:

Leadership Orientations Factor Analyses

(Principal components analysis, with Varimax rotation of all factors with eigenvalue > 1.0. N = 681 higher education raters.)

Factor 1: *Human resource*
(Percent of variance explained = 21%)

Shows high sensitivity and concern for others' needs	.85
Shows high support and concern for others	.84
Is consistently helpful and responsive to others	.83
Builds trust through open, collaborative relationships	.77
Listens well and is unusually receptive to others' input	.71
Gives personal recognition for work well done	.64
Generates loyalty and enthusiasm	.63

Factor 2: *Structural*
(Percent of variance explained = 17%)

Strongly emphasizes careful planning and clear timelines	.79
Has extraordinary attention to detail	.75
Develops and implements clear, logical policies	.75
Approaches problems with facts and logic	.73
Uses logical analysis and careful thinking to solve problems	.72
Sets specific, measurable goals and holds people accountable	.69
Strongly believes in clear structure and a chain of command	.67
Thinks very clearly and logically	.65

Factor 3: *Political*
(Percent of variance explained = 17%)

Is politically very sensitive and skillful	.78
Gets support from people with influence and power	.73
Is a very skillful and shrewd negotiator	.74
Is unusually persuasive and influential	.68
Succeeds in the face of conflict and opposition	.63
Anticipates and deals adroitly with organizational conflict	.59

Factor 4: *Symbolic*
(Percent of variance explained = 13%)

Use celebrations and symbols to shape values, build morale	.68
Sees beyond current realties to create new opportunities	.63
Communicates strong and challenging sense of mission	.63
Is highly imaginative and creative	.60
Inspires others to do their best	.54

Table 4:

Regression Analyses: School Administrators

Ratings of 24 School Administrators (superintendents and other central office) by 147 colleagues

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Manager

R-square = .66

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_0: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	.30	3.411	.001
Human resource	.29	3.208	.01
Political	.27	2.366	.05
Symbolic	.02	0.185	N.S.

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Leader

R-square = .75

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_0: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	.10	1.452	N.S.
Human resource	.17	2.197	.05
Political	.36	3.591	.001
Symbolic	.28	2.670	.01

Table 5:

Regression Analyses, Higher Education Administrators

(Ratings of 187 higher education administrators by 1342 colleagues)

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Manager

R-square = .67

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_0: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	.45	8.92	.001
Human resource	.20	3.34	.001
Political	.38	4.94	.001
Symbolic	-.01	-0.23	N.S.
Gender	.01	0.33	N.S.

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Leader

R-square = .74

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_0: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	.10	2.23	.05
Human Resource	.14	2.68	.01
Political	.35	5.12	.001
Symbolic	.41	5.64	.001
Gender	.03	0.71	N.S.

Table 6:

Regression Analyses: Corporate Middle Managers

(Ratings of 90 corporate managers from Asia, Europe, Latin America and the U.S. by 500 colleagues.)

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Manager

R-square = .77

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_o: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	.17	1.61	N.S.
Human resource	.30	1.78	.01
Political	.40	3.84	.01
Symbolic	.12	0.69	N.S.

Dependent variable: Effectiveness as a Leader

R-square = .87

Frame	**Parameter estimate**	**T for H_o: Parameter = 0**	**Probability**
Structural	-.28	-2.31	.05
Human resource	.31	2.63	.01
Political	.36	2.38	.05
Symbolic	.73	5.17	.001

Table 7:

Correlation of Gender With Frames and Effectiveness

For Self and Colleague Ratings

(Gender: 0 = Female; 1 = Male)

N = 187 (76 female, 111 male)

Frame	**Self-Ratings**	**Ratings by Colleagues**
Structural	.02	-.03
Human Resource	.03	-.12
Political	.00	-.13
Symbolic	.04	-.15
Managerial Effectiveness	(not asked)	-.07
Leadership Effectiveness	(not asked)	-.10